DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 124 875 CS 002 711

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TITLE The Success-Oriented Reading Program: A Strategies Approach.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (21st, Anaheim, California, May 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cloze Procedure; *Educational Strategies; Elementary Education; *Reading Achievement; Reading Diagnosis; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Programs; *Success Factors; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

Success-oriented reading program includes both reading diagnosis which emphasizes students' individual strengths and instructional strategies which guide students toward success and minimize situations leading to failure. Techniques which are successful in overcoming learning detractors are: concentration for distractibility, short term goals for lack of motivation, concentration and word skipping for failure to complete assignments, and direction vocabulary for inability to follow directions. Success strategies for reading instruction include asking interpretive questions, using the cloze procedure, focusing on words missed by students after the reading is completed, building vocabulary, and using the outlived reading lesson plan. (JM)

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The Success-Oriented Reading Program

A Strategies Approach

Presentation Date: Thursday, May 13, 1976
10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
Grand Hotel, Empire/Regency

CS002711

Assuring reading success for all students can be accomplished only by a teacher who is convinced that it is a realistic and realizable goal. A positive, success-oriented teacher attitude is transmitted to students who, in turn, perform according to teacher expectancy. The self-fulfilling prophecy, a product of teacher prediction of student achievement, is one of the strongest forces which acts to influence development of self-confidence and self-esteem, both prerequisites for successful academic performance.

The first step in teacher awareness of student performance is an assessment to reveal the learning and/or skill strengths of each child. Diagnosis must emphasize strengths before weaknesses so that the teacher can alert all students to the fact that they use many successful learning strategies as they work daily. With continued reinforcement and support in these areas, the diagnosed weaknesses can be revealed to students who, operating from a position of strength, can undertake the correction of observed learning problems with success and confidence.

An evaluation of reading skills can be accomplished in many ways. Whatever testing devices are utilized, they should serve first to demonstrate what strategies the student uses as he performs in reading. Does he understand that all reading must make sense and sound like the language he already uses? If his reading reflects this understanding, which word recognition skills are used with various

reading assignments? To what extent are comprehension skills developed, ranging from literal to interpretive and critical? Does the student correct his own reading errors or miscues as meaning discrepancies become evident, or is exclusive attention given to accurate and precise word-calling, though it may be devoid of meaning? Does the student attend solely to visual cues, all the while ignoring the syntax and semantics of language? When teachers believe that reading is synonymous with accurate word calling and decoding, they constantly reinforce this behavior in the learning situation and students respond by relying exclusively on visual cues and ignoring meaning or context. It is at this point that the true purpose of reading is lost to students. Teachers must understand that reading only occurs when meaning is present and that dependence upon visual cues must decrease as the mind grasps ideas, interprets and predicts to make the printed word conform to his understanding of language.

Some instructional strategies which help to guide students toward success and minimize situations in which they might experience failure deal with overcoming learning obstacles, in general, as opposed to eliminating reading problems. Such detractors from learning as distractibility, lack of motivation, failure to complete

assignments, and inability to follow directions are just a few impediments along the road to scholastic success. Successful instructional techniques to apply are:

Distractibility

Instructional Strategy: Concentration -- Students are asked to select from within the classroom or from home any book to look at from an assortment of catalogues, magazines, comic books, dictionaries, newspapers, atlases, encyclopedias, trade books, content books, etc. The only constraint placed upon this activity is that they must look at the material chosen and not look elsewhere during the concentration period. Use of a stop watch makes this extremely effective. The teacher discusses distractibility as a deterrent to success in school and helps students to determine to what extent total attention to a task secures successful results. When Concentration is initiated, each student must attend to the material he has chosen for one minute, with the teacher providing the start and stop time signals. All students can be successful at this task. They then become members of the one-minute club, and receive certificates, stars, or other forms of extrinsic rewards. The following day Concentration is extended to two minutes, again timed by a start and stop signal from the teacher. Students are

encouraged to select different materials as they work, and may turn pages and look, or read. The timed daily activities increase by a minute each day until a pre-determined goal, such as five minutes, has been reached. At this point, further rewards are provided before embarking upon the next goal, which may be ten minutes. In many cases, students reach a plateau beyond which they cannot seem to progress successfully. The teacher should then maintain the Concentration level for the group or class for a short period of time before trying to extend it. Most classes can successfully concentrate from twenty minutes to one hour, depending upon age and maturity level. Students are then guided in the transfer of Concentration to any activity from which they were formerly too easily distracted.

Lack of Motivation

Instructional Strategy: Label the task for Short Term Goal Setting. Students who cannot see the need for an assignment, which at best holds little interest for them, will often respond when told daily or weekly how much work and time the assignment will require, and, that upon completion, there will be some alternatives from which they may select. Explaining what goal will be reached when the assignment is completed, as, "After reading this chapter you will be

able to decide for yourself whether a Democracy is the kind of government under which this country is operating."

Failure to Complete Assignments

Instructional Strategy: Concentration and Jump the Hurdle

Many students fail to complete work because they come to a word, problem, or set of directions which they do not understand. The tendency is to stop work, and either wait for help, or succumb to frustration and give up. Jumping the Hurdle means skip the word and go on, skip the problem and come back to it later, or ask anyone for help. All students should become resources for each other and they should all be encouraged to help whenever asked. Continuing on and not giving up, even if help is not immediately available, is a learning strategy that will enable students to accomplish, complete, and in most cases go back to figure out their own answer or solution.

Inability to follow Directions

Instructional Strategy: Direction Vocabulary

Students should have many sets of directions read to them and should then be asked which words are the important or key words in helping them to determine what to do. These words should be learned for recognition and meaning implications in connection with very specific

subject areas, as:

Combine two sentences into one.

Underline the word that best fits in the sentence.

Select the response that is not correct.

Determine which solution you would obtain from a combination of elements.

Have students then write up sets of directions for particular assignments, using all of the mastered Direction Vocabulary.

Success in reading depends upon how well both teacher and student understand the process. Failure is built in to a program where reading aloud with precision is considered a criterion for success. Stumbling blocks should be anticipated by the teacher and provisions made through group direction or prior instruction to eliminate pitfalls and pave the way for positive reinforcement of all acceptable responses. Teachers should provide learning activities which evoke divergent thought and response, as contrasted to convergent, or, "only one right answer" response. Since reading is a process of reconstructing through one's own language and experiences, the language and experiences of others symbolized in print, it is not reasonable to assume that readers and writer will exactly match. Nor is it likely that any two readers will reconstruct the exact same message.

Success strategies for reading instruction include:

Retelling - Ask students to tell back or interpret what they read. Ask only probing questions which give cues but require further thought and understanding of passages being discussed. Accept responses that students can justify by their own interpretation and visual imagery of the symbolized language.

Cloze Technique - Using a passage from a text or trade book, randomly delete every fifth word. As students participate in this activity, they must provide a word that makes sense to fill in each deletion. Students should be given a wide latitude for variety of responses, as long as the response can be supported by the context of the passage.

Word Identification - During the course of reading a passage, the student may not be able to recognize, or understand the meaning of a word or words. The teacher would be wise to tell the student to "go on" and finish the sentence and then see if he can think of a word or a meaning for a word that would be contextually acceptable. Positive reinforcement should be given for a word provided that it fits the context criterion, even though it may not be the exact word or the exact definition of a word. The student is then free to read with confidence and fluency knowing that context will help him through

word recognition difficulties. Words which a student cannot recognize should be recorded by the teacher and presented in a structured word attack lesson at a later time. Utilizing the cloze procedure is an excellent preliminary step in the development of this strategy.

Vocabulary - Using a modified cloze approach, delete particular class words and have students find as many words as they can that convey the same or similar meanings using the dictionary and/or thesaurus.

Reading Lesson Prototype - For use with reading, trade, or content books.

1. Teacher reads story, passage, or chapter to students in advance of assigned reading by students. This provides students with the opportunity of hearing the reading performed well, which, will in turn, serve as a model for them to follow. It also enables students to listen for comprehension of concepts without struggling over word recognition.

2. Teacher then conducts retelling or questioning strategies for deep and guided comprehension development.

3. Teacher may re-read the whole, or portions of the whole, asking students to follow along silently as she reads. The teacher

should stop at various places during the reading and allow students to call out the word that follows.

4. Students read silently at this point to locate particular information. The teacher should direct students to a page or portion of a selection and then ask specific questions which gives students practice at skimming to locate key words and at deep-reading to provide the required response.

5. The teacher and the entire group may read in unison for oral reading practice, if necessary. This is especially beneficial for students who lack fluency and self-confidence. The teacher sets the pace by reading slowly while phrasing correctly and observing punctuation. This is an additional modeling strategy for students who need it.

6. Oral reading is the culminating activity. Each student may select that part of the story or article which appeals to him the most. He is then given the opportunity to practice reading his selection to a classmate, tutor, teacher, or parent. When oral reading occurs, it should be a pleasurable sharing of a reading experience. It should be done before a group only after it has been practiced and rehearsed. When the student reads the passage he has chosen, he becomes the performer. The rest of the students listen, as an audience with books closed, to a confident, pleasurable rendition of a reading selection.